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THE POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST "UNITED FRONTS" IN WESTERN EUROPE: A FACT SHEET

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Party Secretary Khrushchev's admission at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February that under certain circumstances "socialism" could be attained "by parliamentary means" and his parallel call for "a united front" of "Communists, Socialists and other workers' parties" to preserve "peace" and to "transform" parliament into "an organ ... of democracy for the working people" -- so reminiscent of the Popular Front movement of the 'Thirties -- were of particular interest to both the Communist and Socialist parties of Western Europe.

To the former, Khrushchev's remarks were not only official approval of a course of action that most of them had been pursuing with varying degrees of intensity and success in the postwar period (e.g., the Italian Communist-Socialist "unity of action" pact),^{1/} but also a warning to intensify their "united front" campaigns,^{2/} which most are now in the process of doing.^{3/} To the latter, Khrushchev's endorsement of the "united front" tactic posed a new and serious threat -- so serious that it was made a major item of business at both the full Council meeting of the Socialist International^{4/} in Zurich the following month and a special executive Bureau meeting in London in April, and on both occasions the Communist proposal for a "united front" was "firmly" rejected.^{5/}

- 1/ For example, Communists held ministerial office in the first postwar governments of 8 countries — Austria (1945-47), Belgium (1945-47), Denmark (1945), Iceland (1944-46), Finland (1944-48), France (1944-47), Italy (1944-47) and Norway (1945).
- 2/ At the 20th Congress many of the Western European Communist leaders not only concurred in the "socialism by parliamentary" thesis, but pledged themselves to intensify their "unity of action" campaigns. See Appendix B for representative statements.
- 3/ On their return from Moscow most of the Western European Communist leaders immediately set about redeeming their Congress pledges. In some instances, as in the United Kingdom, a formal invitation was extended to the Socialists and other "working class" elements to join with the Communists in forming a "united front." In other instances, as in Austria and Iceland, the Communists formed so-called "united fronts" with dissident minority Socialist groups to contest the forthcoming general elections.
- 4/ All of the Western European Socialist parties (except Nenni's Italian Socialist Party) are members of the Socialist International.
- 5/ See Appendix C for the statements issued by the Socialist International on March 4 and April 7.

Lest the indigenous Communist parties be disheartened by this international rebuff, a Pravda editorial of March 31 reminded them that the Soviet Union regarded the establishment of "labor unity" or "cooperation between Social Democratic and Communist parties" on the national level as being "of paramount importance" in view of the current international situation and advised them that this "urgent task" called for "the utmost utilization of every opportunity to organize joint actions by the political forces of the working class."

The table in Appendix A, entitled "Socialist and Communist Parliamentary Representation and Popular Vote in the Last National Election," indicates the high stakes that are involved in the current Communist "united front" gambit and how much the various Communist parties stand to gain if their efforts are successful.

In only three countries -- France, Italy and Iceland -- is the Communist Party larger than the Socialist Party. In all other countries except in Finland, the reverse is true and by an overwhelming margin. The Socialists are the largest single party in four countries -- Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland and in the city of West Berlin. They are the second largest in seven other countries -- Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands (tied with the Center Catholic People's Party) and the United Kingdom.

As a result of this strength, the Socialists are the government in two countries -- Norway (majority) and Denmark (minority); the equal partner in one coalition government -- Austria; the dominant partner in six coalition governments -- Belgium, Finland, France, Netherlands, Sweden and West Berlin; the junior partner in two other coalition governments -- Luxembourg and the Saar; and the major opposition party in three parliaments -- Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

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APPENDIX A
SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION AND POPULAR VOTE IN LAST NATIONAL ELECTION AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL

Country	Parliamentary Representation 2/				Popular Vote 2/			
	Socialist Percent	Other non-Communist Left	Communist Percent	Combined Percent	Socialist Percent	Other non-Communist Left	Communist Percent	Combined Percent
NORWAY (1953)	51.3	—	2.0	53.3	46.7	—	5.1	51.8
SWEDEN (1952)	47.9	—	2.2	50.1	46.0	—	4.4	50.4
AUSTRIA (1953)	44.2	—	2.4	46.6	42.1	—	5.3	47.4
UNITED KINGDOM (1955)	44.0	—	—	44.0	46.3	—	0.1	46.4
DENMARK (1953)	42.3	—	4.5	46.8	41.3	—	4.3	45.6
BELGIUM (1954)	40.6	—	1.9	42.5	37.3	—	3.6	40.9
LUXEMBOURG (1954)	32.7	—	5.8	38.5	35.3	2.8 ^{3/}	8.9	47.0
GERMANY (1953)	31.0	—	—	31.0	26.8	—	2.2	31.0
WEST BERLIN (1954)	50.4	—	—	50.4	44.6	—	2.7	47.3 ^{7/}
NETHERLANDS (1952)	30.0	—	6.0	36.0	28.9	—	6.2	35.1
FINLAND (1954)	27.0	—	21.5	48.5	26.1	—	21.5	47.6
SWITZERLAND (1955)	27.0	—	2.0	29.0	27.4	—	2.3	29.7
SAAR (1955)	18.0 ^{4/}	—	4.0	22.0	20.0 ^{4/}	—	6.6	26.6
FRANCE (1956) 5/	15.9	9.7 ^{6/}	25.2 ^{7/}	51.8	14.8	10.9 ^{6/}	25.5 ^{7/}	51.2
ITALY (1953)	12.7	3.2 ^{8/}	24.2	40.1	12.7	6.4 ^{9/}	22.6	41.7
ICELAND (1953)	11.5	3.9 ^{10/}	13.4	28.8	15.6	6.0 ^{10/}	16.1	37.7

1/ Four countries — Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Yugoslavia -- have been excluded from this table: the first three because they do not have a legal Communist Party and the last because it does not have a Socialist (as distinct from a Communist) Party.

2/ In the lower elected house in the case of bicameral legislatures, except for Iceland where the data pertain to the "unicameral" election and not to the subsequent division into a two-chamber legislature.

3/ Socialist Independents.

4/ The Saar Socialist Party (SPS) - 4.0% of the seats and 5.8% of the popular vote - merged with the German Socialist Party (SPD) - 14.0% of the seats and 14.2% of the popular vote -- in March 1956.

- 5/ Although the Chamber of Deputies officially consists of 626 members, all data pertain to just 596 seats as there was no election in Algeria which is represented by 30 seats.
- 6/ Pierre Mendes-France's Radical Socialist Party, the popular vote is an estimate due to the fact that in all official compilations the votes of Edgar Faure's Left Republican Rally were included in those of the Radical Socialist Party.
- 7/ Inclusive of 6 fellow-traveling Progressiste deputies -- 1.0% of the seats.
- 8/ The (Saragat) Social Democratic Party (PSDI).
- 9/ PSDI -- 4.5%, Independent Socialist Union - 0.83%, National Democratic Alliance 0.63% and National Democratic Alliance - 0.45%. The last three groups failed to secure representation in the Chamber.
- 10/ The radical-nationalist National Defense Party (NDP).

APPENDIX B

"PARLIAMENTARY ROAD" AND "UNITY OF ACTION" STATEMENTS BY WESTERN EUROPEAN
COMMUNIST LEADERS AT THE 20TH CONGRESS OF THE SOVIET UNION

AUSTRIAN Party Chairman Johann Koplenig:

"The Communist Party of Austria also sees one of its most important tasks in the struggle for the strengthening of the unity of the working class, for the economic interests of the workers."

BRITISH Party Secretary-General Harry Pollitt:

"... our program -- Britain's Road to Socialism ... shows how the British people can change a bourgeois democracy into a true People's Democracy by transforming Parliament ... into a democratic body expressing the will of the overwhelming majority of its population."

"Right wing Labor leaders are trying to ... preserve the split in the workers' movement they caused. ... The Communist Party is constantly struggling ... to consolidate the entire workers' movement and to use its whole tremendous might in the struggle for a new policy, a policy of peace and social progress. ... In our work we stress the establishment of unity of action in various forms and in all questions concerning the workers. At the same time, we recognize that we still have much to do to fulfill our obligations..

FINNISH Party Chairman Aimo Aaltonen:

"The Finnish Communist Party, with all its strength, will work for the unity of the forces of the country's working classes on the front of peace and socialism"

FRENCH Party Secretary-General Maurice Thorez:

"Ever since 1936 when the popular front was winning its first victories in France, our Communist Party explained to the working class and the people that democracy ... had not yet exhausted all its virtues and that the popular front was a fresh advance in that respect. In 1949 the French Communist Party called upon the working class and the people to fight for a new democracy In an interview with the Times on November 18, 1946, a representative of the French Communist Party ... declared that it was possible in France to envisage other paths to socialism than the one taken by the Russian Communists. He recalled that in any case, according to

Leninist theory the path would be different for each country. We have always thought and said — we said at the time — that the people of France ... would themselves find their own path to greater democracy and social progress and justice."

"To insure the defense of the interests of the masses, the safeguarding of peace, the future of their country, French Communists have struggled relentlessly for the unity of action of the working class. They have pointed out the exceptional importance of common action between socialist and communist workers and the first results obtained, thanks to this unity of action. It is under such conditions that the French Communist Party has seen its influence grow and obtained a great victory in the general election of January 2. ... It is necessary to continue and strengthen the struggle for the unity of the working classes in France. On many points the position of the Socialist and the Communist have drawn closer in recent times. ... With their support (i.e., of "the masses of the people") the French Communist Party will relentlessly pursue its policy of a united working class and the unity of all democratic forces for a future of social progress, peace and national greatness."

GERMAN Party Secretary-General Max Reimann:

"We Communists will redouble our efforts ... to rally all workers and indeed all patriots in a solid battle front against militarism so as to lead the population of West Germany on the road to peace, democracy and progress. ... The Communists will improve their comradely relations with the members of the German Social Democratic Party and trade unions so as to develop the unity of action of the working class with even greater success than hitherto and to conduct even better than hitherto the mass struggles against imperialism, militarism and war."

ITALIAN Party Secretary-General Palmiro Togliatti:

"Naturally, we realize that the road you followed to achieve power and build the socialist society is not necessarily the road that other countries must follow. This road can and must have its own individuality. It is up to us to elaborate an Italian road, taking into account the historical development of the country, its social structure, the orientation and the aspirations of the working masses and their organizations. It must enable us to realize, in the forms suitable to our country, the alliance between the workers, the peasants and the middle classes and to win the large majority of the people for the cause of socialist transformation. ... we want this struggle to take place on the terrain of democracy, and in the traditional forms of the workers' movement, because, as Khrushchev

said, we do not advocate violence for the sake of violence. Since ... the regime of fascism was overthrown, we have been advancing and fighting on the terrain of democracy for more than ten years. ... It is obvious ... that under present conditions, the success of this struggle may lead to the formation in parliament of a truly democratic majority, capable of implementing social reforms and pursuing a policy of peace."

"The working class of our country has made great progress towards achieving unity. This conquest is expressed in the fraternal collaboration between our Party and the [Nenni] Socialist Party. The link is the common struggle for liberty and peace, which we have been waging for twenty years. ... We shall do all that is in our power to enable all those who desire Italy's social progress and the consolidation of the democratic regime ... to get close to us, to understand one another and to collaborate with us. As a result of the increasing power of the peace camp and of our efforts, the efforts of our socialist brothers and of all true democrats, the formation of a large movement uniting men and groups of various trends, but determined to work together to give a new orientation to our whole political life, is a real and concrete prospect."

[The "fraternal greetings" extended by Belgian Party Secretary-General Ernst Brunelle, Danish Party Chairman Aksel Larsen, Luxembourg Party Secretary-General Dominique Urbany, Netherlands Party Secretary-General Paul de Groot, Norwegian Party Chairman Emil Loevlien and Swiss Party Secretary-General Edgar Woog did not contain any reference to either the "parliamentary road" to Communism or "unity of action" — at least, in the version broadcast by Radio Moscow. The remarks of Trieste Party Secretary-General Vittorio Vidali and Swedish Party Chairman Hilding Hagberg were not reported by Radio Moscow. And the Saar Communist Party does not appear to have been represented at the 20th Congress.]

APPENDIX C

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL'S TWO STATEMENTS ON A COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST "UNITED FRONT"

a) Council's March 4 "Draft Statement on the Relations Between the Socialist International and Other Political Forces"

"The changes of Communist tactics which emerged at the recent party congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union are not adequate proof of a genuine change in the principles and policies of the Communist dictatorship and therefore provide no grounds from departing from the position taken up by Democratic Socialism, which firmly rejects any united front or any other form of political cooperation with the parties of dictatorship.

"The Council of the Socialist International considers the minimum precondition, even for the possibility of talks on an international basis, to be the re-establishment of genuinely free democratic labor movements in all those countries where they existed before and have been suppressed or eliminated by the Communist dictatorship."

b) Executive Bureau's April 7 Statement

"Socialism and Communism have nothing in common. The Communists have merely perverted the very idea of Socialism. Where they are in power they have distorted every freedom, every right of the workers, every political gain and every human value which Socialists have won in a struggle lasting several generations.

"We believe in democracy, they don't. We believe in the rights of man, they mock them. This is not changed by the refutation of Stalinism.

"Repudiation by those who whether in fear of their lives or in genuine complicity previously helped in Stalin's crimes and praised his sins, has not fundamentally altered the character of the Communist regime. Even with collective leadership it yet remains a dictatorship; and what they now call "Leninism" is nothing but an earlier edition of the misconceptions and misdeeds of Stalinism.

"We note the professed desire of the Communist party of the Soviet Union for some form of cooperation with Socialist parties.

"But where Socialist parties in the Russian dominated part of the world have cooperated with them, they were crushed out of existence, compulsorily merged or otherwise eliminated by the ruthless methods of a dictatorship which ironically calls itself People's Democracy.

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"Nor can we forget that Socialists are denied all political rights in the countries of the Soviet blocs and that many are still in prison whose only crime was to believe that there are more roads to Socialism than one.

"Therefore the Council of Socialist International has already stated that the recent changes of Communist tactics provide no grounds for departing from the position taken up by Democratic Socialism, which firmly rejects any United Front or any other form of political cooperation with the parties of dictatorship.

"While the Socialist International thus rejects all forms of cooperation with Communist parties, it favours forms of cooperation between Governments which will facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputed issues. The Soviet Union together with the Western Powers has a heavy responsibility for the settlement of such major questions as disarmament and the reunification of Germany solutions for which the whole world is waiting.

"The Soviet Union could, however, immediately contribute to the relaxation of the international situation by stopping the arms sales to the Arab states which have aggravated the danger of war in the Middle East; halting the virulent propaganda campaigns directed against democratic countries; and permitting the free dissemination of news and opinion.

"We reaffirm that without freedom there can be no socialism. Socialism can be achieved only through democracy. Democracy can be fully realized only through socialism. It is indeed Democratic Socialism which offers to the workers of the world the surest way to their emancipation and offers to the peoples of the world a road towards the achievement of a better society."

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